

AN INTERVENTION MODEL FOR
ADJUSTMENT PROCESS
OF FOREIGN RESIDENTS
IN JAPAN : CASES OF THE CHINESE

Inoue Takayo, Ito Takehiko

東京外国語大学
留学生日本語教育センター
留学生日本語教育センター論集 第19号 別刷
1993

AN INTERVENTION MODEL FOR
ADJUSTMENT PROCESS
OF FOREIGN RESIDENTS
IN JAPAN⁽¹⁾ : CASES OF THE CHINESE

Inoue Takayo, Ito Takehiko

(1992. 11. 2 受)

During the past several years, the number of foreigners coming to Japan as students and workers has increased dramatically. Typically, those from China, South Korea and South Asia work and live in the urban areas in Tokyo, receiving low wages. Local governments in the Tokyo Metropolitan area have been forced to provide services for these newcomers. These residents experience specific difficulties living in a Japanese community. A recent study of Meguro Ward(1990) shows that the major causes of their difficulties are communicative problems due to their lack of proficiency in the Japanese language, and the difficulty of adapting to Japanese society due to conflicting cultural lifestyles, cultural traditions and ways of thinking. However, most such investigations deal with physical problems and shed little light on the psychological problems that foreign residents have in trying to adapt to the Japanese community. Inoue (1990) pointed out the importance of clarifying these psychological problems. We will focus on Kita Ward, one of the wards in which the number of foreign residents has increased dramatically, and discuss the problems of the adaptation process of foreign residents, especially Chinese residents. Chinese residents constitute the largest group of foreigners in Kita Ward, and they complain of many serious problems. Chinese residents here refer to people from either mainland China or Taiwan living in Japan on a fulltime basis.

Kita Ward is located in the northern part of the Tokyo Metropolitan area, and ranks 11th among 23 wards with a population of 360,000. Kita Ward still offers low cost accommodations, a moderate cost of living,

convenient transportation, and job opportunities in its many restaurants. These conditions explain why the number of foreign residents there has grown so rapidly. Kita Ward established Foreign Residents Information Service Section in February, 1989. The first author has worked as a counselor in this section and also participated in survey activities.

The purpose of this paper is to examine specific features of the adaptation process experienced by the Chinese residents in this community, through a survey conducted on attitudes of foreign residents in Kita Ward and through case studies. We also suggest a theoretical framework for alleviating the difficulties experienced by foreign residents.

SURVEY ON THE ATTITUDES OF FOREIGN RESIDENTS IN KITA WARD

The survey on attitudes of foreign residents in Kita Ward was conducted in August–September, 1990. In that survey the first author took charge of questionnaires related to psychological adaptation. We will identify the major characteristics of foreign residents' answers and illustrate their problems for adapting to the local community.

Method of the Questionnaire Survey

1040 foreign residents, selected at random from 7952 who had registered with the Kita Ward government and who were at least 18 years old, were mailed the questionnaire. All information provided by the respondents was treated confidentially. The survey questionnaire was written in English, Chinese and Korean. 316 valid answers were received (The rate of reply was 30.4%).

Summary of the Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Almost 80% were of East Asian origin, such as Chinese and South/North Korean. The greatest number were Chinese(55.4%), followed by Koreans(21.2%), Other Asians(11.3%) and American/European(4.1%). The number of

men and women were about equal. Most were young adults in their 20s or 30s (about 80%). About 70% of the Koreans had lived in Japan more than 5 years, and most were permanent residents. In contrast, 72.6% of the Chinese were newcomers, having lived in Japan for “less than 3 years” with short-stay visas. As for their visa status, “Regular Students (college student visa status)/Language Students (precollege student visa status)” were dominant, regardless of sex, and about 70% of them were in their 20s. 63.4% of the Chinese were “Regular students and Language students,” and about 70% of them were working as part-timers.

Psychological Problems of Adjustment to the Local Community

One third of the respondents cited common problems such as “High living costs”(66.7%) and “Poor housing facilities”(37.9%). Many also complained of “troubles at work,” in particular, “few chances to display their own skills and experience.” With regard to “Daily information,” American/-European respondents wanted to obtain “Official Information” and “Daily topics and events,” while the Chinese answered “Japanese custom and habits” as well as “Official services.” This suggests that the Chinese have different types of problems, especially psychological problems, adapting to the local community compared with other nationalities. These psychological problems are experienced in three areas.

Discrimination and Prejudice

About 70% of the respondents said they experienced discrimination and prejudice either “Often”(15.2%) or “Sometimes”(54.1%). The situation in which all nationalities felt discrimination and prejudice the most was when “Looking for housing”(60.3%). More than half of the Koreans and American/European respondents felt this “At public agencies,” and more than half of the Chinese answered “On business.” The Korean respondents, most of whom are permanent residents, felt discrimination and prejudice in such cases as “Marriage” and the “Social welfare system,” while the Chinese felt them in interactive situations such as “On business” and “In the company of

Japanese friends.” Concerning the content of the discrimination and prejudice, Koreans respondents answered “Insults,” American/European and Other Asians answered “Stared at” first, and the Chinese answered “Roughly treated/tormented” first. This feeling of being treated unfairly might prevent the Chinese from making human network with Japanese.

Chinese Residents’ Lack of Personal Networks with Japanese

In response to the question, “From whom do you ask advice?” 92.3% of American/European respondents answered “Japanese friends.” Only 37.1% of the Chinese answered “Japanese friends.” The Chinese also do not have “Friends other than Japanese”(the lowest 20.6% of all other nationalities) and “Nobody”(the highest 14.3% of all ther nationalities). This means they don’t have personal human networks through wich they can ask advice when they have trouble. Most American/European residents make use of volunteers, while Chinese, Koreans and Other Asians do not use these services personally. This indicates that the Chinese do not have enough of a personal network to support them psychologically and to help them adjust to the local community.

Need for Cultural and Personal Interchanges with the Japanese

The Chinese want to “Interact with Japanese (74.3%)” twice as much as other nationalities do. However, only 37.1% of the Chinese answered that they wanted to “Keep in contact with Japanese after going home.” This is in striking contrast to the American/Europearn residents, who want to keep in contact with the Japanese after going home. This suggests that the main importance of interacting with Japanese for the Chinese is “To get a Japanese friend for the sake of convenience” rather than “To get a close Japanese friend.” In answer to the question, “What do you want to do while in Japan?” most Chinese answered “learn Japanese language, culture and traditions” (62.3%) and “Learn Japanese Technology” (50.3%), while only 21.2% wanted to do “Sports and cultural activities.” American/European respondents, however, answered “Learn about Japanese culture” (84.6%) and “Sports

and cultural activities” (61.5%), which means they are trying to adapt to the local community. The Chinese tend to achieve their goal instead of interacting with people in the local community. Most of them are “Regular Students/Language Students” and they need to work hard as part-timers to make money for school tuition or to send money to families back home. Consequently they do not have enough time for cultural interchange with Japanese in the local community.

Opportunity for Joint Productive Activities with Japanese

We found through the investigation that foreign residents in Japan have general problems in adapting to the local community, such as “Housing” and “Daily Information.” They also have psychological problems, notably : (1) experience of discrimination and prejudice, (2) lack of personal networks, (3) lack of awareness of how to interact with local people. The Chinese appear to suffer from psychological problems more than foreign residents. The Chinese experience discrimination and prejudice in personal situations, not in public situations like the Koreans, and the content of this experience of being insulted originates from Japanese specific historical, educational, or cultural background with China.

The Chinese have a relatively weak personal network with Japanese who can support them psychologically in adapting to the local community. This suggests that Chinese are too involved in activities related to their duties and economic necessities. Their human networks are often limited to monocultural relationships only among Chinese, because many of them do not have opportunities to interact with Japanese as Case K in the following section experienced.

O'Donnell *et al.* (1992) stresses the importance of “joint productive activity,” which provides opportunities for individual and community development because the participants share the perceived purpose of producing a product through cooperative interaction, which facilitates learning and the development of relationships. These kinds of activities should be organized by the local government and people in the community.

CASE STUDY

In this section, we will present two contrasting cases of adjustment of Chinese and discuss the role of community intervention. The first case represents cross-cultural misunderstanding exacerbated by problems in an intercultural marriage. The second case is a positive bi-cultural adjustment facilitated by appropriate opportunities for intercultural activities.

1) Case :“T”

T is a thirty-one year old Chinese woman who came from Shanghai to Tokyo in February, 1989, as a “Language Student.” She married a Japanese man in May 1989, but the husband ran away after just one week. She came to the Foreign Residents Information Service at Kita Ward office because she feared visa problems without her husband’s guarantee of support.

Through counseling she discovered that her marriage had failed because of mutual misunderstanding from the outset. He married her out of sympathy, and she got married believing that she was loved by him. His concept of a wife was that a wife should follow her husband obediently, just like a traditional Japanese wife, while her concept was that a wife may assert her own independence in life, just like a Chinese wife. The reason why he ran away after just one week of marriage was that he experienced a serious culture shock because of these differences. She, however, could not understand the meaning and the depth of his culture shock.

After about one year, T met another Japanese man and married again. She is now very nervous about her new married life with her second husband because her first marriage failed. She does not have any close friends whom she can look to for advice and psychological support. She still goes to the Foreign Residents Information Service to receive counseling, hoping to understand what Japanese married life involves and how to be a Japanese wife.

Since her first Japanese husband, as well as most Japanese men, tend

not to express their love for a wife in words, she felt isolated. Her most serious problem has been that she often feels she is losing touch with her own culture, habits and personal identity, as she tries to make a real effort to be a good wife to her husband.

2) Case “K”

K is a twenty-seven year old Chinese man who came from Shanghai to Tokyo in April, 1990, as a “Language student.” K attended a Japanese language school during the daytime and worked as a waiter at night. Now he goes to a college for film makers with a Regular Student visa status. Through a program at his college, he experienced practice training in a rural village. He stayed with a farmer’s family for two weeks and assisted the host family with their work routine, such as rice planting. Through this experience he felt that he had achieved his goal of cooperating with the Japanese through genuine interaction.

He knows many Chinese who gave up trying to stay in Japan with a Language Student visa because of the pressure of hard work, insufficient chances to exercise their abilities in careers and business, discrimination and prejudice, as well as the lack of a personal support network.

K did not want to be isolated from the community, and he participated in the activities of the “Ikebukuro Institute of Cross-cultural Understanding” following his teacher’s advice. The Institute is in contact with volunteers seeking to cooperate with foreigners to institute a cross-cultural library, while also helping foreigners. He really wanted to share in these activities with all member.

We think that it is effective and important to intervene with those foreign residents who have difficulty in adjusting to Japanese community life because of cultural differences. We must provide them with more information about daily life and more consultation.

In the case of T, the counseling activity not only contributed direct psychological support but also facilitated her intercultural understanding and better adjustment. We call this kind of intervention “remedial” or

“therapeutic.” This is one aspect of the role of local government; the other consists of activities which can prevent foreign residents from maladaptation because of cultural misunderstanding. The local community must make more efforts in this area, through public relations, etc.

K’s successful adjustment suggests that participation in an activity is crucial to active adjustment in Japanese community. Volunteer activities only by Japanese to support foreigners is not enough. T’s homestay at a farmer’s house aided his adjustment to Japan and his understanding of life in Japan, although the program was not specially arranged for foreigners.

We must organize various kinds of joint activities in the community, schools, etc.

DISCUSSION

Japanese Culture and Developmental Community Psychology

One of the difficulties foreigners face in adjusting to Japanese society is understanding differences in human relationships stemming from characteristics of Japanese culture. These are represented by such key words as “amae” (Doi, 1973, 1986), “honne vs. tatemae,” “vertical society” (Nakane, 1970), and “the spirit of Wa (harmony).” Markus and Kitayama (1991) characterized this kind of Japanese mentality as “collective self” in contrast to the individual self, which is dominant in Western culture. It is easier for American/European people to recognize such difference between their own culture and Japanese culture. Although there are a lot of cultural similarities among East Asian countries, it is difficult for Chinese and Koreans to understand the unique characteristics of Japanese ways of thinking (See Okuda and Tajima, 1991).

Intervention Activity in Developmental Community Psychology

From the viewpoint of developmental community psychology, intervention with foreign residents can be summarized as in Table 1.

Table 1. Paradigm of Intervention Activity
in Developmental Community Psychology

Levels of Intervention	Setting in Ecological Systems*	Purpose of Activity	
		(a)Therapeutic Activity	(b)Preventive Activity
(1) Assistance for Individual	Micro-	(1a) Individual counseling	(1b) Education aboutinter- cultural differences
(2) Direct Intervention to Individual +Group	Micro- Meso-	(2a) Counseling in the system Group work	(2b) Social skill training Education for prevention
(3) Structural Intervention to Individual +Group +Community	Micro- Meso- Exo- Macro-	(3a) Conflict resolution Mediation of groups Coordination of institutions Community Policy	(3b) Joint productive activities Community enlightenment Community planning

*See Bronfenbrenner (1979)

In order to have foreign residents overcome culture shock and help their adjustment process in Japan, we hypothetically suggest a comprehensive approach based on the framework of the Developmental Community Psychology. On the individual level (Level 1), counseling to the individual client who needs such an assistance is important for treating the client and improve the involved situation(1a), it also must be utilized for prevention purpose(1b). For prevention of misunderstanding of the mutual cultures, intercultural education in non-counseling situation is also important. Therapeutic approach to a group(2a) is also effective. In this case, the counselor must pay attention to the client's situation including her meso-system, that is, various social settings in her life. As an example of preventive activity(2a) in Japan, Tanaka & Fujiwara (1992) tried a social skill

training for foreign student for better adjustment to their social life. The approach of Rogers (1986) to social conflict such as political confrontation in North Ireland by utilizing his group encounter theory was one of conflict resolution activities(3a) initiated by psychologists.

As we have already discussed above, joint productive activities, {categorized as (3b)} let participants prevent social isolation and cultural maladaptation and facilitate human networking. These activities are especially necessary for Chinese residents in the Japanese community not only to alleviate their adjustment problems, but also to enrich their culturally integrative experience in Japan.

REFERENCES

- Bronfenbrenner, U. B. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press.
- Doi, L. T. (1973). *The anatomy of dependence*. Tokyo : Kodansha.
- Doi, T. (1986). *The anatomy of self : The individual versus society*. Tokyo : Kodansha.
- Inoue, T. (1990). *How do foreign residents cope with living in a monocultural community? : Counseling foreigners in Tokyo*. The 22nd International Congress of Applied Psychology. Kyoto.
- Markus, H. R. & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self : Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, **98**, 224-253.
- Meguro Ward (1990). *Questionnaire survey on general living conditions of foreign nationals residing within Meguro Ward*. Meguro Ward, Tokyo (In Japanese).
- Nakane, C. (1970). *Japanese society*. Berkeley : Berkeley : University of California Press.
- O'Donnell, C. R., Tharp, R. G., & Wilson, K. (1992) Community intervention and youth development. *ISSBD Newsletter*, **21**, 1-4.
- Okuda, M. & Tajima, J. (1991). *Asian foreigners in Ikebukuro*. Tokyo : Mekong. (In Japanese).

- Rogers, C. R. (1986). *Rust workshop : A personal overview*. Unpublished.
- Tanaka, T. & Fujiwara, T. (1992). Difficulty in interpersonal behavior of international students in Japan : Implications of Japanese social skill learning toward cross-cultural adjustment. *Shakai hinrigaku Kenkyu*, 7, 92-101. (in Japanese with English summary)
-

(1) This paper is a version of Inoue & Ito (1992). Adjustment process of foreign residents living in Japan: The case of the Chinese, presented at the XXV International Congress of Psychology held in Brussels, July 19–24, 1992. This research was financially supported by research fund by APIC Foundation provided to the authors and Prof. Tamiko Daicho at Aoyama Gakuin University.